

Key Issues in Enterprise Portals, 2009

David Gootzit

The enterprise portal topic covers a range of portal trends and technologies, but it also relates to broader trends impacting the Web. Because portals remain relevant to many areas of enterprise and consumer IT, a variety of IT roles and business users will find valuable insights in this research.

ANALYSIS

The enterprise portal research area focuses on the products and infrastructures associated with the development and deployment of enterprise portals. Gartner defines an enterprise portal as a Web software infrastructure providing access to, and interaction with, relevant information assets (information/content, applications and business processes), knowledge assets and human assets, by select targeted audiences, delivered in a highly personalized manner. Enterprise portals may face different audiences, including employers (business-to-enterprise), customers (business-to-consumer) and trading partners (B2B). Intranets and extranets relate to the enterprise portal topic, as well.

Gartner enterprise portal research covers trends, technologies, product functionality, market developments, vendor strategies, and best practices for deployment and management, product and vendor selection, and portal acquisition and deployment cost analysis. Our research also addresses the relationship of enterprise portals to other technology areas, including, but not limited to, enterprise mashups, CRM, social computing, business process management (BPM), ERP and supply chain management (SCM).

The portal market experienced strong growth during this decade, despite negative economic cycles during this time frame. Gartner clients continue to express high interest in enterprise portals, even though the enterprise portal concept and the primary technology enabling it have reached maturity. Enterprise portals reflect a type of enterprise Web site, as well a type of technology used as the foundation for an enterprise Web presence. Portals are used by enterprises, but portals also are relevant to the consumer Internet. Many companies that revisit their Web strategies implement portal technologies aimed at providing an externally facing Web presence. Internet megaportals, such as Yahoo, Microsoft Network (MSN) and Google, are high-profile examples of portals in a consumer Web context. Social networking, social tagging, wikis, blogs and personal home pages are examples of Web 2.0 functionalities that frequently were found early on in the consumer Web, which enterprise vendors providing horizontal portal offerings now claim to provide. Although the primary focus of this research is enterprise portals, it also will track technology developments among megaportals that will affect enterprise portal software and deployment patterns, such as advancements with end-user mashups.

Many, but not all, enterprise portals are built using a portal product that is based on a portal container, or a software suite that includes portal functionality. A portal product is a packaged software application that is used to create and maintain enterprise portals. These products can be used to design vertical or horizontal enterprise portals.

- Vertical portals focus on accessing specific applications or business functions.
- Horizontal portals seek to integrate and aggregate information from multiple cross-enterprise applications, as well as specific line-of-business tools and applications.

Although software-as-a-service (SaaS) vertical portals have been popular in several industries for several years, 2008 marked greater interest in SaaS and in cloud-based portals for horizontal portal deployments. Alternative approaches from the classic horizontal portal container approach now exist to build enterprise portals. Enterprises need to carefully evaluate the pros and cons of these approaches for their specific projects.

Target Audience

Portal area research is directly applicable to IT professionals and business users, including, but not limited to, the following representative roles:

- Application designers
- Application developers
- Application managers
- Business process analysts
- Client services managers
- Content managers
- Directors of applications
- Directors of corporate communications
- Directors of e-business
- Directors of Internet strategy
- Enterprise architects
- Graphical user interface designers
- Information architects
- Integration engineers
- Intranet managers
- IT process analysts
- Partners
- Portal architects
- Portal developers
- Project managers
- Software designer
- System architects
- Web architects
- Web designers
- Web developers
- Web managers

Key Issue: How are organizations using portals to deliver business value by increasing business agility, improving efficiency and accomplishing other objectives?

Enterprises have successfully used enterprise portals to improve employee productivity and customer and partner satisfaction, as well as enhance revenue and profitability. Portals are used to increase business agility by improving an organization's ability to respond to and exploit

changes in the competitive environment. Understanding the relationship of portals supporting specific business objectives, as in how supplier portals support electronic invoice presentment and payment (EIPP), is important (see "The Role of Supplier Portals in EIPP").

Applying the correct management strategies to portals to ensure that they deliver business value is crucial (see "Portals Should Be Managed Like Applications"). Research in this area will focus on how organizations use different types of portals to improve operational efficiency and, increasingly, achieve cost savings. It will also show how portals can be used to increase effectiveness and deliver innovation. Examples of covered topics include:

- The use of portals as platforms for the development and deployment of composite applications, including end-user mashups
- The evolving role of portals in organizations' user interface strategies, especially in relation to rich Internet applications (RIAs)
- The relationship of portals to CRM initiatives
- How the new features of future portal frameworks will deliver value
- The role of portal technology in service-oriented architecture (SOA) initiatives
- How portals expose processes that reduce enterprise costs
- Portal cost justification and cost analysis
- How enterprise portals are used in specific industries, such as healthcare, higher education and financial services, to create competitive differentiation and improve efficiency

Key Issue 2: How will portal technologies evolve through 2013, and which vendors and open-source alternatives will provide these capabilities?

Understanding the evolution of portal technologies, alternative approaches to building enterprise portals, and the portal market is critical for organizations to succeed in their enterprise portal deployments. From a technology perspective, enterprises should leverage the second generation of portlet standards, but other technological approaches are emerging that will greatly impact enterprise Web strategies (see "Second-Generation Portal Standards Should Be Used for Portlet Development but Aren't the Whole Story").

The portal industry has experienced significant consolidation. However, some vendors offer multiple portal offerings, and open-source portal options are evolving. Gartner is closely monitoring the evolving role of open-source portals in enterprise portal deployments (see "Open Source and Portals, 2008"). Additionally, alternative approaches to traditional server-side portal containers exist to build enterprise Web experiences. Gartner's "Magic Quadrant for Horizontal Portal Products" details how today's portal vendors are positioned to meet tomorrow's portal challenges.

Research coverage in this area will include:

- Identifying which vendors will be long-term players as vendor consolidation continues, open-source alternatives gain traction and new entrants emerge
- Evaluating the appropriate role for mashups in the enterprise, including their relationships to enterprise portals
- Analyzing major vendors' portal and user experience (UX) strategies

- Evaluating the emergence of the "portal-less" portal
- Determining when to use client-side vs. server-side portal approaches
- Analyzing vendors' efforts to incorporate new portal functionalities into their products across areas ranging from end-user mashups to social networking
- Tracking enterprise use of open-source portal alternatives
- Analyzing relevant standards and specifications in the development and use of portals

Key Issue 3: What will the portal of the future look like, and what impact will it have on enterprises and society?

Portals are evolving. Enterprises need to plan for the variety of technical approaches that will increasingly prove useful as the foundations for enterprise Web presences. Server-based horizontal portal frameworks have been joined by client-side approaches from the RIA realm. Mashup assembly frameworks may also come to play a significant role in enterprise portal strategies. Additionally, enterprises are increasingly interested in "Enterprise Portals in the Cloud."

Contextual personalization has long been a feature of enterprise portal products, and portal technologies will play important roles in delivering contextual computing. Enterprise portals will also play prominent roles in enterprises' overall UX strategies. Increasingly, the average user will access a variety of enterprise and nonenterprise portals, ranging from their business-to-employee portals, to banking portals, to government portals, to megaportals. These portals and other Web sites will interact in new ways, connecting to provide the "portal fabric." However, the portal fabric will require an aggregation mechanism. The MyPortal, or a personal portal, may emerge as the primary point through which users interact with their portal universe. The following topics will be investigated:

- Emergence and suitability of cloud-based enterprise portal offerings
- Development of the portal fabric, and its impact on the enterprise and society
- Portals' role in an organizations' overall UX strategies
- Emergence of MyPortal, and its adoption in the enterprise
- Relationships between portals and organizations' social networking strategies
- Relationships between portals and organizations' mobility strategies

Key Issue 4: How should organizations design, deploy and maintain their portals?

Organizations should incorporate best practices, where available, around their initial portal deployments, as well as apply lessons learned to ongoing initiatives. Gartner recommends "Eight Strategies to Contain Enterprise Portal Costs" during difficult economic times. Organizations that make a new investment in an employee-facing enterprise portal can leverage our research on how to create a "Business-to-Employee Portal RFP." Organizations can apply Gartner's "Framework to Facilitate Portal Rationalization Decisions" to evaluate where to continue investment across their portal portfolio. "Making Enterprise Portals Healthier" discusses the need for regular monitoring of specific qualitative and quantitative metrics to ensure that the portal remains aligned with business objectives. Information on cutting-edge uses of portal technologies is useful also for planning the evolution of an organization's portal use. Many technology

attributes of Web 2.0 provided inspiration for enterprise portal deployments and site redesigns in 2008. In 2009, interest in adding social-computing features to enterprise portal deployments will continue, but resources may be limited. Guidance on the following topics will be provided:

- Best practices for portal project planning and implementation
- Best practices for portal operations and maintenance
- Best practices for employee-facing, customer/constituent-facing and partner/supplier-facing portals
- Staffing guidelines and skill requirements
- Architectural approaches for portal deployments
- Portal governance strategies
- Enablement of interoperability among portal deployments, including the integration for Office SharePoint Server 2007 with other portals
- Portal environment consolidation strategies
- Reducing portal operational costs without impacting end-user satisfaction

RECOMMENDED READING

"Toolkit: How to Create a Business-to-Employee Portal RFP"

"The Role of Supplier Portals in EIPP"

"Portals Should Be Managed Like Applications"

"Open Source and Portals, 2008"

"Second-Generation Portal Standards Should be Used for Portlet Development but Aren't the Whole Story"

"Hype Cycle for Web and User Interaction Technologies, 2008"

"Web Content Management and Portals: Collusion Not Collision"

"Microsoft Tiptoeing Toward WSRP Production in SharePoint"

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Corporate Headquarters

56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
U.S.A.
+1 203 964 0096

European Headquarters

Tamesis
The Glanty
Egham
Surrey, TW20 9AW
UNITED KINGDOM
+44 1784 431611

Asia/Pacific Headquarters

Gartner Australasia Pty. Ltd.
Level 9, 141 Walker Street
North Sydney
New South Wales 2060
AUSTRALIA
+61 2 9459 4600

Japan Headquarters

Gartner Japan Ltd.
Aobadai Hills, 6F
7-7, Aobadai, 4-chome
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0042
JAPAN
+81 3 3481 3670

Latin America Headquarters

Gartner do Brazil
Av. das Nações Unidas, 12551
9º andar—World Trade Center
04578-903—São Paulo SP
BRAZIL
+55 11 3443 1509